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1967/10/03

MEMORANDUM ~~TOP SECRET~~ - EYES ONLY

105

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

October 5, 1967
9:30 a.m.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Tom Johnson

Attached are the notes of your meeting with Secretary Rusk, Secretary McNamara, Mr. Rostow, Director Helms and George Christian on October 3, 1967 in the Cabinet Room.

The meeting began at 6:10 p.m. It ended at 9:30 p.m.

Attachment

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October 3, 1967

NOTES OF THE PRESIDENT'S MEETING WITH SECRETARY RUSK, SECRETARY MC NAMARA, MR. ROSTOW, CIA DIRECTOR HELMS, AND GEORGE CHRISTIAN

The President called on Secretary Rusk to review the discussions at the United Nations.

Secretary Rusk: While at the United Nations I had sessions with the editorial boards of Newsweek, McGraw-Hill, and the Wall Street Journal. Those meetings were most profitable.

On the Middle East question, [redacted] The provisional draft is still the basis for talks. (1-301(d) 5)

[redacted] I told them it was not for the United States to come up with a blueprint made in Washington. I referred them to our five points. 1-301(d) (5)

[redacted] 1-301(d) (5)

Secretary Rusk: [redacted] 1-301(d) (5)

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[redacted]

While I was at the United Nations I saw 47 in bilateral meetings and 100 in various groups. There was some discussion of Vietnam. Many said there was a need for us to stop the bombing of the North. I told them that we have not been able to find anybody who can tell us what will happen if we were to stop the bombing.

Hanoi has not said they would talk if we stop bombing. However, in these most recent exchanges, they haven't said no exactly.

The President then asked Secretary McNamara to report on his trip to Ankara.

Secretary McNamara: [redacted]

The President: [redacted]

Secretary McNamara: [redacted]

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Secretary Rusk:

Secretary McNamara:

The President:

Secretary McNamara:

The President: What do we know about the negotiations?

Secretary Rusk: We will know in two days. Kisinger told them that we are against waiting any longer, that we are getting impatient. Bo wrote a message which is on the way by air mail special delivery. In his phone call with Kisinger, Bo said something like talks will start after the cessation of bombing.

Rostow: To correct that, it was that talks could start but no other assurances were given.

Director Helms: There were some great difficulties because we had an American who does not understand much French talking to a Frenchman who does not understand much English over a trans-Atlantic phone call. It is important that we wait and see what the written message actually says.

The President: What about the Shah and his efforts?

Secretary Rusk: He may make unilateral contact with Hanoi. I do not think he will get anywhere. He may get a group of countries together to push negotiations. The Shah is one of our good friends on this.

The President: Did you talk to Gromyko on the bombing?

Secretary Rusk: I told him nobody would tell us what would happen

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if the bombing stopped. The Russians have given up any attempt to try to influence Hanoi.

The Secretary discussed the prisoner who had been released to the NLF. This prisoner, a woman, is the wife of one of the high ranking members of the Politburo. We need to stir Thieu and Ky up to probe around more with the NLF.

Bunker should ask Thieu and Ky to get something going. This one is purely our thing. We need to get them going on something.

Mr. Rostow: It would be excellent for Thieu to say in a very lucid inaugural speech that the NLF has a role in the political future of the country. It would help us too.

The President: With validation behind us, we should get Thieu to get the most progressive civilians in government. As I told Walter Washington in setting up the District of Columbia Government, there is a need to "get with it" out there.

We need programs for health and education and land reform. They have got to show that they know what they are doing.

We need to get General Westmoreland to get the South Vietnamese army in line. They have got to get in where the fighting is. We cannot have our fatalities running higher than they are on the Vietnamese side. I want to know it first if this is a white man's war, as so many people are charging.

On another issue, the President said that the leadership of Congress indicated to him in a meeting Monday night that it would not tolerate the large demonstration which is planned for late October. I have told Secretary McNamara to get going on plans to protect the White House, the Pentagon and the Capitol.

Secretary McNamara: Warren Christopher is heading up the task force which is meeting periodically on this. There are some very key questions which must be answered. They would include whether the President should be in Washington or not.

The President: Yes, I will be here, they are not going to run me out of town.

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Secretary McNamara: The President's presence in Washington may do more to stimulate than to calm it. In any case, that is one of the questions we have to discuss. We have got to train the Washington police and the National Guard to handle this job. We also have to figure out how to arrest thousands and put them in jail if it is justified. The jails won't hold the numbers that could be arrested.

The GSA has done a magnificent job in training the guards at the Pentagon. You can't imagine how they are faced with provocations. They do anything which would further aggravate the situation.

If we are asked, I think we should tell the press that we are prepared to maintain order.

It is important to remember that they are not only after the Pentagon but will approach the White House.

They have not requested audiences with any of us but they most surely will. If they ask to see the President, I do not think it would be wise. It would be better for some of us, perhaps myself, to meet with them.

The President: I saw some leaks on my meeting with the Harvard educators last week.

George Christian: I thought that the fact that the President met with those people did us a lot of good.

The President: Bob, Did you see the New York Times story on resistance to the draft?

Secretary McNamara: Yes, I am concerned about racism in the military service. There is a movement of civilian dissatisfaction into the services. I am also concerned about resistance to the draft. There have been some cases, one in Dover, Delaware, which shows that there are problems of this type.

I met with a group of Negro publishers last week to discuss this matter.

The President: I want you to take the New York Times article and analyze it and let me know what you think of it.

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What are we doing about Westmoreland's memorandum on the DMZ?

Secretary McNamara: We are doing the following:

-- We will accelerate sending out brigades

-- We will retain the 9th Marine Amphibious Units

1-3D1(2)

The President asked what happened in the DMZ, why were they no longer shelled at the Marine site at Conthien.

Secretary McNamara said he did not know if this was a result of our action or their decision.

The President asked if we should move our people back, as has been suggested?

Secretary McNamara: I do not know. There is a very detailed tactical decision, and I would prefer to leave that to the Joint Chiefs. In my opinion however, I would move it around.

Secretary McNamara continued: --- We are going to shave unit training but we are not going to shave any individual training. Unit training will be cut by four weeks, but General Westmoreland will give them four weeks of unit training when they get out there to make up for this.

-- It will probably be July before the Vietnamese get their 60,000 to 65,000 more men into action. The problem is with non-commissioned officers and officers.

-- The Thais have come in with a message through the Ambassador that they should contribute 5000 troops rather than 10,000 troops as had been previously discussed.

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The President said that he had told Australian Treasurer William McMahon that the President would be able to hold out longer in Vietnam if Prime Minister Holt would put in 5000 more men. I told him we need some more troops. He told me how he lost some elections and they were not in a good position at the moment.

Secretary McNamara: I told him about the same thing. Our people will not permit us to stand around.

We would make a bad mistake. We signed an agreement with Australia last year, without any provisos, that we would supply credit for up to $90 million. Congress recently has denied us that authority. I told him that we would stand behind this somehow, although I am not sure how we will do it.

The President: Prime Minister Menzies said that everybody must speak on our policies frequently. He said that we should repeat ourselves frequently, because we never are speaking to the same audience twice.

He thought Senator Kuchel made a very good speech today on the consequences of stopping the bombing.

A captured document from a North Vietnam Ph. D. showed that the Gallup poll in this country sustained them in Hanoi. This Ph. D. also said, "How can we believe anything Johnson says if his own people do not believe him?"

Secretary McNamara continued: It is important for us to get extra free world troops into Vietnam. We need them. The people out there have got to know what is going on.

-- We will accelerate the shipment of M-16's to the ARVN. We think we should put all these guns in Southeast Asia and not sell any outside of this area.

-- We are also working on intensifying the training to provide better field accuracy in the use of artillery.

The President then mentioned a delegation which would be sent to the Vietnam inaugural. The President said he would talk to Vice President Hubert Humphrey about heading the delegation tomorrow. The President then mentioned a memorandum from Congressman Tip O'Neal of Cambridge,

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Massachusetts. The information was that O'Neal had changed from a Hawk position to a Dove position with the help of two assistant secretaries, a CIA agent, and representatives of the Department of Defense. The President said he was astounded to find that there were several groups of people who were working to get Congressmen who are in agreement with our policies to make a reassessment. In this case, Senator Teddy Kennedy had approached Congressman O'Neal and asked him to review his position on Vietnam rather than risk political disaster. Congressman O'Neal talked with several people in the administration. A press article which mentioned Congressman O'Neal's change in position pointed out that it was the President's own people that were responsible for the change.

The President said we should remember that what we are saying today may change next week. We should never lock ourselves in positions publicly which would not allow us to change them.

Secretary McNamara: If we stop the bombing, I think that the Pennsylvania formula (the Kissinger formula) is appropriate.

The President: I wouldn't stop the bombing unless they agree:

1. To meet promptly

2. To push for a settlement.

Secretary McNamara: It is important that we know the facts about the bombing. It is not a fact that pauses have hurt the lines of communication in the North. [redacted] 1-301 (a) (4)

Secretary Rusk: If the bombing isn't having that much effect, why do they want to stop the bombing so much?

Mr. Rostow: The bombing and the other things are making it very unpleasant and very costly for them.

[redacted] 1-301 (a) (1) (4)

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Director Helms: We will have to do over all that we have done in Hanoi, particularly the power plants, the bridges, and the rail lines.

Mr. Rostow: If I could sum up, this is the effect of the bombing:

-- Industrial and agricultural production has been cut.

-- 500,000 men have been diverted full and some part time as a result of the bombing.

-- It is a heavy cost.

-- But they have the kind of tactics that can still sustain them at this cost if they choose to.

-- If we stop the bombing, it will bring their economy back up and permit them to increase their commitment in the South.

-- No bombing means less strain and less cost.

Secretary McNamara: I do not agree with that.

The President: I want the best case from you, Walt, for bombing all targets and I want from Secretary McNamara a position on this.

There was then the discussion of the polls, including the New York poll. The President said that he believed we had lost people away from us in the last two weeks. He pointed out again the need to be making more speeches, although they may be rather similar in nature.

Secretary Rusk: I found in my own experience that you cannot say the same thing twice in Washington. But you can get out in other states and make the same speech and get a very good reaction.

The President: We have to get answers to all of these slogans which everybody is making up. We need a few slogans of our own. We need to answer the slogans:

"Stop the bombing; Negotiate now; Enclave Theory Stalemate."

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Secretary McNamara: We have enough targets for the time being. We should have a separate meeting with the Joint Chiefs on bombing. They recommend Phucyen Air Field again.

Secretary Rusk: Not right now, I would defer that 24 hours until we get Pennsylvania out of the way.

The President read ticker items of Senator Dirksen's debate on the Senate floor today with Senators Fulbright and Mansfield and others. The President said that the Ways and Means Committee shelved the tax message today.

The President said he did not want any of the information which he was about to discuss to go outside of the room. The President asked what effect it would have on the war if he announced he was not going to run for another term. He said if it were set either way today, the decision would be that he would not run.

The President said he thought it would be advantageous to welcome both the Democrats and the Republicans to come out with the programs and policies and let the American people decide who they believe should be their next President. He said the President is already in the goldfish bowl, so it might be good for all of those who want to have the job to express themselves to the people. He said he was considering welcoming all comers to come out with their programs.

Secretary McNamara: I do not think that the Democrats should get out on the block.

Secretary Rusk: You must not go down. You are the Commander-in-Chief, and we are in a war. This would have a very serious effect on the country.

The President: If I were to run again, I would be the first President to do it. That is, no other President who has served for part of a term, then for a full term has ever succeeded himself for another full term.

Secretary McNamara: I don't think you should appear too cute on this.

The President: What I am asking is what would this do to the war.

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Secretary Rusk: Hanoi would think they have got it made.

The President: Our people will not hold out four more years. I want to get rid of every major target. Between now and election, I am going to work my guts out. I would be 61 when I came back in, and I just don't know if I want four more years of this. I would consider telling the American people that it is an awfully long period. But I am afraid it would be interpreted as walking out on our men.

We are very divisive. We don't have the press, the newspapers or the polls with us, although when I get out into the country it seems different than it is here.

Secretary Rusk: Victor Riesle, a labor columnist, said you would win by a bigger margin next year than you did before.

The President: What I really want to know is the effect of the announcement, what we say if we do decide that way, and the timing of it.

Secretary McNamara: Of course, there would be no worry about money and men. We could get support for that. I do not know about the psychology in the country, the effect of the morale of the men, and the effect on Hanoi.

I do think that they would not negotiate under any circumstances and they would wait for the 1968 elections.

The President then read Congressional reports on what various members of the Congress were saying about Vietnam. The President said that 95% of the people believe there has been a change of attitude on Vietnam. They all think that we will lose the election if we do not do something about Vietnam quick. They are all worried about expenses.

Secretary Rusk: In my opinion, the tax bill made many doves.

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